

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

Status of Claims:

Claims 1-3, 18-20, 35 and 38 are currently being cancelled.

Claims 4-6, 10-12, 14-16, 21-23, 27-29, 31, 36, 37 and 39-40 are currently being amended.

No claims are currently being added.

This amendment and reply amends and cancels claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claims remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

After amending and canceling the claims as set forth above, claims 4-17, 21-34, 36, 37 and 39-40 are now pending in this application.

Indication of Allowable Subject Matter:

Applicant appreciates the indication of allowable subject matter made in the Office Action with respect to claims 4, 6-9, 11-13, 21, 23-26, 28-30, 36 and 39. By way of this amendment and reply, claim 4 has been placed in independent form to include the features of its base claim 1 and intervening claims 2 and 3, whereby other amendments have been made to change the “means plus” function features to “non-means” features. Therefore, presently pending independent claim 4 (as well as claim 5 which now depends from claim 4) is now believed to be in allowable form. Claim 6 has been placed in independent form to include the features of its base claim 1 (there are no intervening claims), whereby other amendments have been made to change the “means plus” function features to “non-means” features. Therefore, presently pending independent claim 6 (as well as claims 7-10 and 14 which depend either directly or indirectly from claim 6) is now believed to be in allowable form. Claims 11 and 12 have each been placed in independent form include the features of their base claim 1 (there are no intervening claims), whereby other amendments have been made to change the “means plus” function features to “non-means” features. Therefore, presently pending independent claims 11

and 12 (as well as claims 13 and 15-17 which depend either directly or indirectly from claim 12) are now believed to be in allowable form. Claims 23 and 25 have each been placed in independent form include the features of their base claim and any intervening claims. Therefore, presently pending independent claims 23 and 25 (as well as claims 22 and 24-27 which depend either directly or indirectly from either claim 23 or claim 25) are now believed to be in allowable form. Claims 28 and 29 have each been placed in independent form include the features of their base claim and any intervening claims. Therefore, presently pending independent claims 28 and 29 (as well as claims 30-34 which depend either directly or indirectly from either claim 28 or claim 29) are now believed to be in allowable form. Claim 36 has each been placed in independent form include the features of its base claim and any intervening claims. Therefore, presently pending independent claim 36 (as well as claim 37 which depends from claim 36) is now believed to be in allowable form. Lastly, claims 39 and 40 have each been placed in independent form include the features of their base claim and any intervening claims. Therefore, presently pending independent claims 39 and 40 are now believed to be in allowable form.

Claim Rejections – Prior Art:

In the Office Action, claims 1-3, 5, 10, 14-20, 22, 27, 31-35, 37, 38 and 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,115,588 to Nasuda in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2001/0004375 to Partyka. Due to the cancellation of claims 1-3, 18-20, 35 and 38 and due to the amendments made to claims 5, 10, 14-16 (and thus claim 17 which depends indirectly from claim 14), 22, 27, 31 (and thus its dependent claims 32-34) and 40 so that these claims now depend from an “allowable” claim (see discussion) above, this rejection is now moot.

Conclusion:

Since all of the issues raised in the Office Action have been addressed in this Amendment and Reply, Applicant believes that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and an early indication of allowance is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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